duty on Natural Rubber will be incompatible with WTO regulations. However, the Govt. has filed its negotiating proposals with the WTO for inclusion of rubber in the rationalisation of product coverage under the Agreement on Agriculture.

Applications Cleared by FIPB

2584. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 33 applications for investment by foreign firms recommended by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board, have been cleared by the Ministry very recently;

(b) if so, the total amount and investment expected; and

(c) whether the backward States like Bihar will be benefited from such foreign investment and if so, to what extent?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN SINGH): (a) and (b) A total number of 33 proposals envisaging total FDI of Rs. 362 crore for different States and Union Territories, covering various sectors including manufacture of chemicals, textile processing, laminated flooring material and accessories, processed food, automobile components, scientific equipment, electronics, information technology and ISP, software development and consultancy, telecommunications and data systems, have been cleared recently by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) in accordance with the prevailing FDI Policy and in consultation with concerned administrative Ministries/Departments.

(c) The investment decisions are dependent upon the commercial judgement of the investors which depends on the availability of adequate and dependable infrastructure facilities such as power, developed land, etc., and incentives and subsidies provided by State Governments for attracting investment into the States and Union Territories.

Emerging Threat to Indian Leather Industry

2585. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that technical specifications on product quality are fast emerging as a threat to the $ 2 billion Indian Leather Industry;

(b) whether these unrealistic specifications are being imposed on us by the Developed countries to prevent imports into their country; and

(c) if so, the details of action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMARABDULLAH): (a) to (c) There are no specific product-quality related restrictions on exports of leather goods from India. However from time to time some of the countries have been requiring suppliers including Indian exporters to meet certain consumer/environment security standards which the Indian industry has been able to comply with. In this regard Government organisations like Central Leather Research Institute and Footwear Design and Development Institute are assisting the industry by extending appropriate technical support.

Free Import of Silk Fabrics

2586. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that prominent silk exporters throughout the country have urged Government to allow free import of silk fabrics to improve the quality of silk made garments and curb rampant smuggling of silk fabrics into the country;

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto and whether it is proposed to concede this demand; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Some silk exporters of the country have represented to the Government regarding removal of import restrictions on silk fabrics. Silk fabrics are classified under Chapter 50 of ITC(HS) Classifications of Export and Import Items, 1997—2002. Import restrictions on these items are likely to be removed by 31.03.2001.

Export of Gems and Jewellery

2587. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state: